

*'Gay [Youse] always felt she could be the best teacher if she was the best artist she could be. I think she [felt] the responsibility to pass on the legacy to new artists. Art [was] her life.'*

VIRGINIA FREYERMUTH, director of art at the Duxbury public schools

# Mounting 'A Tribute to Gay Youse'

## Duxbury museum exhibits works of late artist, teacher

By Judith Montminy  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

**D**UXBURY — One year after the artist's death, former Duxbury resident Nat Simkins asked the Art Complex Museum to mount an exhibit honoring the legacy of artist, teacher, and gallery director Gertrude Ann Youse, affectionately known as Gay.

"She was a major force in the art community out of Boston," said Simkins, who credits Youse with changing his life by introducing him to art when he was a sophomore at Duxbury High School in 1972. He continues to paint and earns his living in commercial art.

"I saw her two weeks before she died, and I thought somebody's got to put together a big show for her," he said. Youse was 67 when she died in August 1994.

His request eventually led to the Art Complex Museum's "A Tribute to Gay Youse" exhibit, which runs through April 5 and includes 16 paintings and watercolors painted by Youse during her last 30 years. It is the first exhibit to celebrate her contributions and influence on artists and students in Duxbury, Boston, and Maine.

"She really excelled at landscape painting," said Lisa Weber Greenberg, the museum's exhibitions curator. "And I think she really found her subject in Maine. There are truly wonderful paintings of Western Island. The exhibit has four of them lined up against the wall."

Next Sunday afternoon a panel discussion with artists, a collector, and friends will examine Youse's life and significance in her varied roles as artist, teacher, and gallery director.

Youse, a charismatic teacher who taught privately and with the Duxbury Art Association, often took teenage students under her wing and introduced them to literature, music, and film as well as art. She also directed the Helen Bumpus Gallery at Duxbury's library from 1968 until the late 1980s. Even though she stopped teaching in 1983, she saw her exhibits as an extension of her classes.

"Having good pictures in the gallery is teaching, in a way," she told a reporter for South Weekly in 1989 when Youse's work was featured in a one-person show at the Bumpus Gallery after the gallery trustees insisted she hold the exhibit. For more than 20 years she dedicated herself to exhibiting the work of up-and-coming and established area artists, including Stoughton artist Jack Wolfe, former Duxbury artist Leigh Palmer, Harold Tovish, Lloyd Lillie, and Lois Tarlow. She also mounted tribute exhibits honoring artists Karl Zerbe and David Aronson, two of her teachers at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

"Gay was pretty well connected to the art community in the '50s in Boston, and she stayed friendly with people," Greenberg said. "The level of artists that were shown at the Helen Bumpus Gallery" was high.

"Many of these people have Gay on a pedestal like you wouldn't believe," Greenberg said.

Simkins's request for the Youse tribute arrived in 1995, shortly after Greenberg started her job at the museum. She was intrigued and started to talk to people who knew the late artist. Their reverence and glowing reports amazed Greenberg.

"I've never quite experienced this phenomena of a single individual meaning so much to one community," Greenberg said. "Just the coverage of her own show at the Helen Bumpus Gallery... [The Boston Globe] South Weekly wrote about, Robert Taylor wrote a review in the Boston Globe, Lois Tarlow wrote about it in Art New England."

Virginia Freyermuth, director of art at the Duxbury public schools and a former Massachusetts Teacher of the Year, often speaks glowingly of Youse's work and influence. "Gay always felt she could be the best teacher if she was the best artist she could be," Freyermuth said in a 1989 interview. "I think she [felt] the responsibility to pass on the legacy to new artists. Art [was] her life."

Simkins shares Freyermuth's assessment. He, too, places Youse on a pedestal.

"In my eyes, she was almost like a saint," he said. "No materialism. She wasn't after fame, she wasn't after fortune. This woman was poor. She didn't make a lot of money, and she didn't quite fit in with

# 'Gay' remembered

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the Duxbury crowd."

As a single woman artist living in the suburbs Youse was an anomaly. She also was modest about showing her work.

"I don't think that selling her work was ever something she tried to do," said Sarah Weeks Peabody, an artist friend who painted with Youse in Maine. She met Youse in the 1960s when her former husband, Hyman Swetsoff, exhibited Youse's work at his Newbury Street gallery. "I think if anybody had asked her,

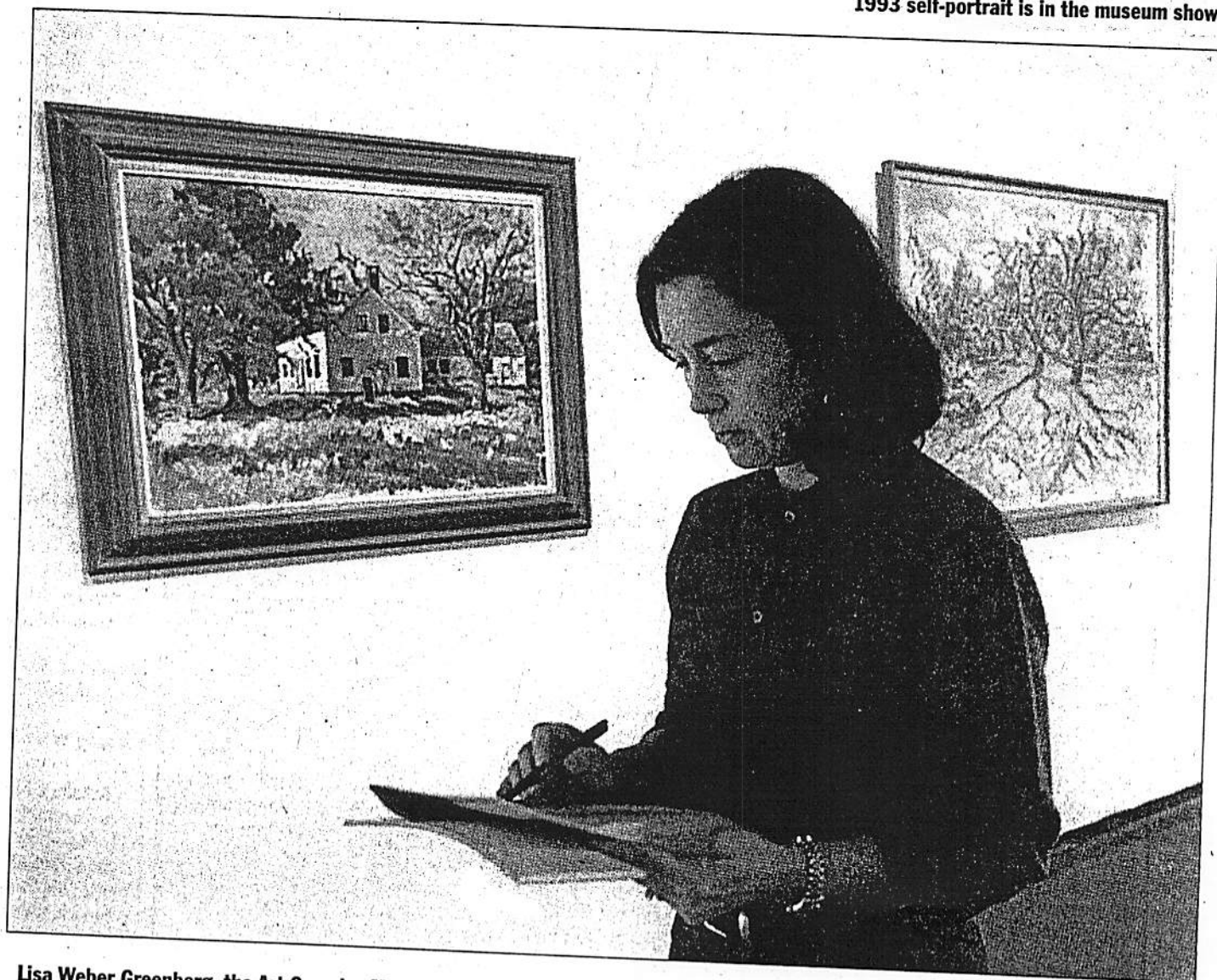
'Why don't you go around with your work and try to show it to galleries,' she would say, 'I'd rather paint,'" Peabody said.

Youse lived the lessons she taught her students.

"In that era of 'do your own thing,' the early Seventies, Gay actually did her own thing, and she wasn't afraid to do it," Simkins said. "She was a very honest person. 'You can be what you want to be,' she would say. 'Don't shirk away from it, you don't have to go with the crowd.' And she backed me up. I'm eternally grateful to her for that."



Gertrude Ann "Gay" Youse's oil on canvas 1993 self-portrait is in the museum show.



Lisa Weber Greenberg, the Art Complex Museum's exhibitions curator, checks paperwork. Behind her are two of Youse's landscapes.

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